



News Release

For immediate release: February 25, 2014

(14-027)

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***Salmonella* risks rise as raising chickens becomes popular family activity**

OLYMPIA — Raising chickens for eggs or as pets has become more common. And spring has become a time when people become infected with *Salmonella* after buying chicks, ducklings, or other live poultry and handling them without properly washing their hands.

“Many people enjoy raising chickens but might not know that all poultry, even birds that appear clean and healthy, may carry bacteria called *Salmonella*,” said Kathy Lofy, interim state health officer for the Department of Health. “While it’s fun for families to get baby birds, the bacteria they shed can make people sick. This is especially true for young children, who account for the largest proportion of live poultry-related *Salmonella* cases.”

Last year, 19 people in Washington were part of a multi-state outbreak of *Salmonella* illness associated with handling live poultry. Thirteen of the cases were children under the age of 10. Nationally, more than 500 illnesses from at least 39 states were linked to *Salmonella* outbreaks related to live poultry, including those kept in backyard flocks.

Spring is the season when many people who keep chickens or ducks in backyard flocks order baby birds. Children should be supervised carefully, making sure they wash their hands right away after touching these animals or their environments. Adults should make sure kids don’t nuzzle or kiss animals.

Youth under 5-years-old, elderly adults, and people with weakened immune systems are most likely to get very sick from *Salmonella* and should avoid handling live poultry.

Salmonella infection can cause diarrhea, fever, stomach pain, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms usually last several days. Severe cases may require hospitalization and can result in death.

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More tips on how to [avoid *Salmonella* infection from chicks and ducklings](#) are on the Department of Health's webpage.

It's important to protect your birds from infections as well. Follow recommended practices of [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) to protect your flock against disease.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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